

THE READING TEACHER

I.C.I.R.I. BULLETIN

**INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT OF READING INSTRUCTION**

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I. C. I. R. I. BULLETIN

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

GREETINGS!

New York University
New York 3, New York
September 1, 1949

Dear Members of I.C.I.R.I.:

May I take this opportunity to extend my warm personal greetings to those of you who belonged to our organization before I became President, and to welcome most heartily those of you who have become new members through the summer and fall months. Both groups are to be commended and congratulated for the overt evidence which you have given of your interest in improving reading instruction, either by sustaining your membership in an organization consecrated to this purpose, or in joining it anew.

In spite of the numberless research studies which have been made in the field of reading and the improved methods and materials which are being employed, reading instruction still falls short of reaching the goals which most of us have set for it. Thousands of children are experiencing frustration and defeatism in their school achievement because of their inefficiency in reading. Even those who are getting along fairly well could probably do better. Reading achievement has no limits. There seemingly is no end-joint to growth in this important skill. Each of us adults probably could read faster, probably could read with greater depths of interpretation than we do in our daily reading activities.

The challenge is before us! Shall we meet it? Is it possible to raise the level of reading instruction? We believe that it is. This is the chief reason for

the existence of The International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction. The extent to which our organization contributes to this objective depends upon the strength of its individual members. That is why you are so important to this organization; that is why this organization is so important to you--and to children in our schools everywhere!

Now I must tell you some of the news. Last spring we had a four page leaflet printed, giving the aims and purposes of I.C.I.R.I. Several copies of this leaflet were sent to instructors of reading courses in many of the teachers colleges and schools of education throughout the country. As a result our membership was increased by a third, and in addition large numbers of inquiries have come in asking for more information about the organization and for instructions in regard to organizing local councils. All of this interest shows what a real need this organization has to serve.

Mrs. Johnson and her committee have set up an excellent program of themes for study for the next three years, together with thought provoking questions for discussion, and a bibliography for reference. This should serve as a splendid study guide both for individuals and groups.

Mr. Cline has drafted a handsome and dignified charter blank which is now being prepared in print on a fine grade of paper. Each local council as well as the International Council will have one of these charters signed by the officers of the organization.

(continued on page 2, column 1)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
(continued from page 1)

A fine meeting of I.C.I.R.I. is being planned in conjunction with the A.A. S.A. Convention in Atlantic City. It will be held from 2:00 to 4:00 on Wednesday afternoon, March 1. The program will consist of a speaker and a panel discussion on the theme of "differentiated Instruction." Other meetings-at-large will be planned at a Board meeting which is scheduled for October 1. You will hear more about these later.

We would be very glad, indeed, to hear of any meetings which local councils are planning. We would like to pass this information on for the benefit of others.

In conclusion, I should like to convey two very special messages. First, I wish to express my deep gratitude to Mr. Kress, our faithful and industrious Executive Secretary, and to our loyal group of Board of Executives and their committees, all of whom are giving such splendid support in furthering the activities of our organization.

Secondly, may I wish each and every member of I.C.I.R.I. much personal success and happiness in the year's work ahead, and especially may you have gratifying results in improving your reading instruction in whatsoever form it may take!

Fraternally yours,

Nila Banton Smith
President

* * *

In one month, during the past summer, 152 new members joined I.C.I.R.I. and 30 requests for local council information were made.

BASES OF GROUPING IN READING

Ethel B. Berdelman

I. SUMMARY OF OPINION

Grouping has been widely discussed and many opinions have been stated. Beginning in the 1920's, the belief that grouping was necessary to provide for individual differences in reading ability and other subjects has been accepted by educators. There have been schools where attempts have been made to place all children of each grade in homogeneous groups. This has been done mainly on the basis of I.Q., as indicated by standardized tests. Large classes were in turn divided into sections on the same basis. Another technique was to group by socially homogeneous groups, usually determined by a combination of such factors as age, interests, abilities, school habits, and social traits. Some provision for teacher judgment was usually made. Difficulties arose, and various educators stated that there was no such thing as a truly homogeneous group because of individual differences. It was stated that children knew in what group they were placed and classified themselves as "slow" or "bright". Another theory believed that grouping helped dull children the most, because more effort was expended to make the work interesting and varied.

Early in the trend toward grouping to provide for individual differences, the stress was placed on grouping in reading, because it is the basis of almost everything else. Smith (1) reports that, in the early 1920's, "the appearance of tests which could be used in revealing individual weaknesses and also the large number of publications on the subject of diagnostic and remedial work combined to direct attention to individual needs". This in turn led to the recommendation of ability grouping in reading. By the late 1920's, grouping tended to be determined by other factors than intelligence. Scientific recommendations included consideration of reading ability or dis-

(continued on page 3, column 1)

BASES OF GROUPING IN READING (continued from page 2)

ability, special reading interests, social background, physical condition, emotional maturity, etc. The term "remedial case" came to mean really problem cases, not every child who was slow in reading. Methods used indicate that activities were varied; that special instruction was given to slow groups to develop those skills which were retarded or lacking.

Manuals to accompany basal readers published in the late 1920's call attention to the fact that varying abilities must first be determined, then the class divided into homogeneous groups, according to reading ability, usually three groups. The manuals stress the fact that each group should be permitted to progress as rapidly as its ability will allow. The teacher's instruction can be adapted to meet the needs of the group, whether it be the accelerated, middle, or slow group.

In the Thirty-fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (13), several educators emphasize the increasing attention on grouping. Raup (15) believes that the increased emphasis on grouping has been a part of a larger effort to deal with the problems of individual differences under the pressures that come with increasing mass education. He reports that a dual approach to grouping has been made: grouping to provide for individual differences, and grouping according to subject matter standards. The usual objection to ability grouping of all grades throughout a school (such as the formation of X, Y, and Z groups according to results obtained by standardized tests) is that it is not democratic. Turney (19) believes that grouping of some kind is universally accepted. He advocates grouping on the basis of ability, although this alone cannot be a full picture of the expectancies of accomplishment. Alberty and Brim (1) believe that ability grouping lends itself admirably to the submergence of the individual in

the common activities of the group. Baker (2) emphasizes that the objectives for bright groups must be broadened to provide stimulation of a variety of interests and abilities; for slow groups, careful selection of what is presented and consideration of the accomplishment expected to provide for definite success and encouragement is essential. Special stress for definite success and encouragement is essential. Special stress must be placed on successful social relationships with slow groups.

In discussing individual differences in relation to instruction in reading, Durrell (5) states that: "Various types of ability grouping tend to make classes more homogeneous, particularly in general achievement levels, but a wide variety of differences is always present. Children with like scores on achievement tests differ in certain phases of reading, such as amount of voluntary reading, interests in reading, rates of learning". Ability grouping will generally decrease the range of reading levels in classrooms, but it leaves unsolved the major problems of providing for individual differences.

Whipple (20) discusses some of the characteristics of a sound reading program. Because of the necessity of caring for changing needs, the class organization must be flexible. The class may be together at times, in small groups at other times using material suitable to the ability of the group. The grouping may change, with a child in a "high" ability of the group for oral reading and in a "low" group for silent reading. There must be an ample supply of suitable reading materials.

An appraisal of different methods of adapting reading instruction is made by Lindahl (10). The teacher will not attempt to teach the entire class as a whole, for she cannot be aware of children's differences in attitudes, capacities, readiness, and interests. The size of classes in public schools prohibits individual instruction throughout, and children enjoy the feeling of
(continued on page 4, column 1)

BASES OF GROUPING IN READING (continued from page 3)

belonging to a group. Sometimes these groups must be subdivided into still smaller groups for special work on some reading skill.

The reason for grouping is to adapt instruction to care for individual differences. With this in mind, the teaching plan or procedure must be based on a recognition of individual differences. According to Durrell (5), two factors are inherent in any successful plan: efficiency in improving reading, and power to establish a desire for reading. In setting up a plan, the teacher should: be familiar with individual differences of pupils; have specific objectives for each child or group of children in the class; have a definite plan for observation of pupils' growth in voluntary reading; know the books available to children; make adequate provision for different reading abilities of pupils; have a definite plan for motivation of reading; and give full attention to growth in vocabulary. According to this author, the wide range of abilities in reading is due to the following variations: intelligence, sensory capacities and physical condition, background of language development, confusions and faulty habits in the learning process. Durrell (5) states that: "The goal of reading instruction is to enable each child to advance in skill and interest as rapidly as his abilities permit." To accomplish this, certain factors are considered. The teacher should:

1. Provide reading materials suited to individual ability.
2. Carry on small group instruction on fundamental problems in the classroom.
 - a. Determine by classroom analysis of abilities the common need for each group.
 - b. Keep grouping flexible.
 - c. Begin grouping gradually.
 - d. Put one pupil of the group in charge of the group.
 - e. Plan carefully all assignments.

- f. Keep a list of the needs of the group at hand in preparation of all lessons.
- g. Use only exercises which have previously been demonstrated by the teacher.

The teacher must determine where the class stands in relation to reading. For children requiring remedial work, various techniques are required in attacking the problems encountered at various grade levels. Points mentioned by Dolch (4) are summarized below. In grade one, it is frequently necessary to have a pre-reading group because some children are not ready to learn to read. The question of promotion arises for the very slow readers. In the second grade, there will be at least three groups at various levels of ability, and in the third grade the same conditions will exist. By the third grade, a wide range of abilities is apparent. Several reading groups are indicated. The book used for each group should be on the level of reading ability of that group, but with a challenge for the children. The fourth grade will show the fast readers far ahead, the slow readers farther behind. By the middle and upper grades, the range of abilities will be much wider. The non-readers present a definite problem requiring individual assistance. The group of poor readers can be helped by the way in which the daily lesson is presented. Small remedial groups are possible, with special emphasis on reading skills which need to be developed.

II. CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING GROUPING

The initial step in planning a program of group instruction in remedial reading is to evaluate the reading achievement of the entire group (Pulliam 14). After the retarded readers are screened out, a study of the difficulties of each should be made. One plan for grouping consists of making several small groups of pupils with similar weaknesses. One program suggests the following principle skills to be emphasized: vocabulary development, rate of reading, and rate of comprehension. This is for a junior high school level. (continued on page 5, column 1)

BASES OF GROUPING IN READING (continued from page 4)

As early as 1922, Stone (17) recommended that, after the administration of scientific tests to determine individual differences in reading ability, two, three or four groups be formed and given material suitable to the ability and interest of the group. The methods of instruction were to be varied to fit the needs of the specific group. Specially retarded readers might best be placed in an ungraded room. Rate and comprehension were given as the criteria for determining the grouping. Children should be shifted from one group to another if special need or progress of the child so dictated.

Gates (7) believes that the child's status of reading readiness should be determined in the following aspects: intelligence or verbal aptitude, vision, color blindness, hearing, handedness, speech, health and vigor, and emotional stability. For middle and upper grades, he advocates a team of four tests as a basic reading test; and a reading survey for checking speed, accuracy, and comprehension. Results of these tests tend to indicate a division of the class into three groups for further teaching of reading. Often reading ability of a child who is low in one part of the test can be improved rapidly through special attention to the skill or skills involved. In all groups, material must be kept on the child's level of maturity, but with some challenge in the material. This author believes that diagnostic, specific appraisals are superior to a composite score for determining reading ability. However, if desired, a composite score can be computed from such tests with a high degree of reliability.

Groups should be tested to discover individual differences in the classroom, not only by standardized tests, but by measuring attitudes and interests, level of ability, comprehension, interpretation, recall, and the like, according to Durrell (5). To provide for individual differences, the class is divided into several groups of four to six pupils each, grouping being determined on the basis of significant needs. A group of 35 children

may be divided into two or three groups, but tests reveal the need of smaller divisions. The usual basis for grouping in primary grades is the level of ability in reading. Group instruction should start gradually, with one or two groups of superior readers working independently while the teacher aids a third group. The number of groups may gradually increase. The suitability of assignments for groups determines the success of small-group work. Small-group instruction should be flexible. Assignments for all groups built around a center of interest for the entire class is enriching and encourages an exchange of ideas. It is vital that teachers plan for a wide range in reading materials available.

In the 1942 report of the Conference on Reading, University of Chicago (12) Monroe emphasizes that it is important that few mistakes be made in grouping. She reported one study in which first grade entrants were tested and predictions made as to later progress in reading. One year later, tests were given and the results compared with predictions. Errors were few. It was found easier to predict which children would be poor readers than which would be superior.

After observing a large number of classrooms MacLachy (11) reports the following conditions: The criteria for assignment to a group included an oral-reading test, followed by a silent-reading test, both given by an authorized person; and an analysis of oral reading of each child. Usually two or three groups were set up in a class. Sometimes there was need of a fourth group, for children who must learn to read. Material must be well rounded and suitable to the abilities of the child.

Beginners should be grouped by chronological age, by intelligence tests (difficult in such young children), and by reading readiness tests, according to Dolch (4). He also believes the reading readiness test is the best method usually. He advocates homogeneous grouping in the first grade on the basis of maturity and reading readiness.

(continued on page 6, column 1)

BASES OF GROUPING IN READING (continued from page 5)

III. METHODS BY WHICH GROUPING IS PRACTICED

In the first grade, Lamoreaux (9) suggests flexible grouping of pupils who are ready to read in six to twelve groups. The more capable readers should be in larger groups, and the less capable readers in smaller groups. The material must be varied. For children not ready to read, the author suggests that the problem may be handled in various ways: They may form a "reading group" in the first grade, if the number in the class is small. If there are enough children and enough teachers, separate rooms should be provided, using such terms as "Junior Primary," "Little B 1's," or "Reading Readiness Groups." The children may be in such a transition group for one semester or for a year, depending on time of promotions and the state of readiness of the child. Another system is a "Primary Class," for all children, a 1- or 2- year term. In such a Primary Class, the children are grouped and re-grouped according to progress.

A plan called the "Primary School" is another suggestion for solving the problem of remedial work in the primary grades (Dolch 3). The children are grouped as nearly as possible in ability and achievement, and there are no grades one, two or three. If children advance ahead of the group to which they are assigned, they are moved to the next higher group. When ready to read fourth grade material, they move into the fourth grade. An increased number of groups in such a set-up allows placement of a child in a group nearer his own ability. According to this author, the plan practically eliminates remedial reading in grade four. He also reports that the usual practice is to carry on remedial reading in grade four. He also reports that the usual practice is to carry on remedial reading through "slow progress" groups, who must be given every encouragement and instilled with a feeling that this group is an opportunity. The parents must understand the entire

picture. Some of the new series of readers are using topics and pictures for older slow readers, which is an encouragement for the children. The work of slow-reading groups must be kept interesting.

Promotion time brings difficulties, for retarded readers will not have achieved the same level of accomplishment as good readers, according to Lindahl (10). A plan to create Junior 1B and Junior 2B classes for children whose readiness to read is delayed has been tried in the public schools of Mishawaka, Minn. with considerable success. Another plan is unit organization in grades one through three, or one through four, usually with no grade designation, and using only the teacher's name to designate the class.

Types of small-group organization, as reported by Durrell (5), include:

1. A unifying center of interest.
2. Independent group interests.
3. Class preparation and group recitation.
4. Unit-adjustment plan (which the author considers the least desirable.)

Another plan suggested by this author is that of homogeneous grouping of an entire school for the reading period. This plan has the advantage of each teacher's concentration on a particular task. The disadvantages of such a plan are in mixing children of varying ages and seeming acceleration for some of the younger children. Such a plan must be well organized and carefully administered. There will still be a necessity for small group work within each group. In large schools with two or more rooms to a grade, pupils may be grouped according to similarity in reading achievement. This type of grouping is debatable, according to the author.

Kottmeyer (8) reports a plan of group activity carried out to a great extent by student helpers, who are selected because they (the helpers) will benefit by the work they will do with the other child. Able readers should be used

(continued on page 7, column 1)

BASES OF GROUPING IN READING (continued from page 6)

first, but as the plan becomes more familiar, others should be worked in. Sequences of work for each group are set up. The teacher's role becomes one of general supervision. Grouping must be flexible. All groups should know what their test results are and understand their own difficulties. Work level of material must be carefully selected. Small group activities should be started slowly, and gradually brought to a level where they operate independently.

Because of the present system of compulsory education, many poor readers and non-readers reach high school. Provision must be made for special help if they are to have any measure of success. Courses are being modified, easier texts are used, reading materials on different levels of difficulty are provided. Poor readers are sometimes placed in separate classes for reading only, in some large schools. Sometimes special sections of a regular English class are formed. This is a summary of opinions expressed by Dolch (4).

Special reading groups, on a secondary level, have arisen because some children have failed to make "normal" progress in regular classes, and have become more and more retarded as they are pushed along in school, according to Strang (18). These special groups work primarily to improve reading. Four types of special classes have been formed. First, there are subject classes with special attention to the improvement of reading, frequently called "special English" classes. Secondly, there may be reading classes for all pupils, in relatively homogeneous groups as indicated by standardized tests, with group activity directed by the needs of the group. In such a plan all teachers participate, thus becoming more proficient as teachers of reading in their own subjects. Thirdly, there are reading groups for selected pupils, with selection frequently based on language difficulty.

(concluded on page 10)

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR READING INSTITUTES

The three year program for the annual institutes of the Reading Clinic has been published by the Department of Psychology of Temple University. Each year a different facet of reading instruction is emphasized. The following topics have been selected for consideration during the next three years:

1950: January 30-February 3, inc.
BASIC READING PRACTICES AND MATERIALS

1951: January 29-February 2, inc.
SYSTEMATIC SEQUENCES IN READING

1952: January 28-February 1, inc.
PREVENTION AND CORRECTION OF READING
DIFFICULTIES

The program is so organized that Boards of Education and State Departments of Education can send delegates for many purposes. Attention is given to the problems of those who are organizing new programs as well as to the evaluation of existing programs. Plans are differentiated to meet the needs of teachers and supervisors at all school levels, college instructors, reading clinic directors, school psychologists, special class directors, speech educators, and vision specialists.

Many types of activities are included in the institute programs. There are lectures, demonstrations of procedures and techniques, opportunities for laboratory practice, evaluation meetings, seminars, and staff meetings. Staff members of the Temple University Reading Clinic are available for conferences with delegates.

The staff of the institutes is composed of members of the Reading Clinic Staff and distinguished specialists in reading and related areas. Members of the staff are selected on the basis of their professional contributions to developmental, corrective, or remedial reading.

The 1950 Institute will consider many areas of the general theme, BASIC READING
(concluded on page 10, column 2)

THE POOR SCHOLAR'S SOLILOQUY

Courtesy, Department of Visual Education
University of Florida

No, I'm not very good in school. This is my second year in the seventh grade, and I'm bigger and taller than the other kids. They like me all right, though, even if I don't say much in the classroom, because outside I can tell them how to do a lot of things. They tag me around and that sort of makes up for what goes on in school.

I don't know why the teachers don't like me. They never have, very much. Seems like they don't think you know anything unless they can name the book it comes out of. I've got a lot of books in my room at home--books like Popular Science, Mechanical Encyclopedia, and the Sears and Ward's catalogues--but I don't very often sit down and read them through like they make us do in school. I use my books when I want to find something out, like whenever Mom buys anything second hand I look it up in the Sears' or Ward's first and tell her if she's getting stung or not. I can use the index in a hurry.

In school, though, we've got to learn whatever is in the book and I just can't memorize the stuff. Last year I stayed after school every night for two weeks trying to learn the names of the presidents. Of course I knew some of them, like Washington, and Jefferson, and Lincoln, but there must have been thirty altogether, and I never did get them straight.

I'm not too sorry, though, because the kids who learned the presidents had to turn right around and learn the vice-presidents. I am taking the seventh grade over, but our teacher this year isn't so interested in the names of the presidents. She has us trying to learn the names of all the great American inventors.

I guess I just can't remember names in history. Anyway, this year I've been trying to learn about trucks because my uncle owns three and he says I can drive one when I'm sixteen. I already know the horsepower and number of forward and

backward speeds of twenty-six American trucks, some of them Diesels, and I can spot each make a long way off. It's funny how the Diesel works. I started to tell my teacher about it last Wednesday in Science class when the pump we were using to make a vacuum in a bell jar got hot, but she couldn't see what a Diesel engine had to do with our experiment on air pressure so I just kept still. The kids seemed interested, though. I took four of them around to my uncle's garage after school and we saw the mechanic, Gus, tear a big truck Diesel down. Boy, does he know his stuff!

I'm not very good in Geography either. They call it Economic Geography this year. We've been studying the exports and imports of Chile all week, but I couldn't tell you what they are. Maybe the reason is I had to miss school yesterday because my uncle took me in his big trailer truck down state about 200 miles, and we brought almost ten tons of stock to the Chicago market.

He had told me where he was going, and I had to figure out the highways to take and also the mileage. He didn't do anything but drive and turn where I told him to. Was that fun! I sat with a map in my lap and told him to turn south, or southeast, or some other direction. We made seven stops, and drove over 500 miles round trip. I'm figuring now what his oil will cost, and also the wear and tear on the truck--he calls it depreciation--so we will know how much we made.

I even write out all the bills and send letters to the farmers about what their pigs and beef cattle brought at the stockyards. I only made three mistakes in 17 letters last time, my aunt said, all commas. She's been through high school and reads them over. I wish I could write school themes that way. The last one I had to write was on "What a Daffodil Thinks of Spring", and I just couldn't get going.

I don't do very well in school in
(concluded on page 9, column 1)

THE POOR SCHOLAR'S SOLILOQUY (continued from page 8)

Arithmetic either. Seems I just can't keep my mind on the problems. We had one the other day like this:

"If a 57 foot telephone pole falls across a cement highway so that 17-3/6 feet extend from one side and 14-9/17 feet from the other, how wide is the highway?"

That seemed to me like an awfully silly way to get the width of a highway. I didn't even try to answer it because it didn't say whether the pole had fallen straight across or not.

Even in shop I don't get very good grades. All of us kids made a broom holder and a bookend this term and mine were sloppy. I just couldn't get interested. Mom doesn't use a broom any more with her new vacuum cleaner, and all our books are in a book case with glass doors in the parlor. Anyway, I wanted to make an end gate for my uncle's trailer, but the shop teacher said that that meant using metal and wood both, and I'd have to learn how to work with wood first. I didn't see why, but I kept still and made a tie rack at school and the tail gate after school at my uncle's garage. He said I saved him ten dollars.

Civics is hard for me, too. I've been staying after school trying to learn the "Articles of Confederation" for almost a week, because I want to be a good citizen. I did hate to stay after school, though, because a bunch of us boys from the south end of town have been cleaning up the old lot across from Taylor's Machine Shop to make a playground out of it for the little kids from the Methodist Home. I made the jungle gym from old pipe, and the guys made me Grand Mogul to keep the playground going. We raised enough money collecting scrap this month to build a wire fence clear around the lot.

Dad says I can quit school when I'm fifteen, and I am sort of anxious to, because there are a lot of things I want to learn how to do, and as my uncle says, I'm not getting any younger.

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NEW POSITIONS FOR ICIRI MEMBERS

Opal Belchar - Maumee Country Day School, Maumee, Ohio, Remedial Reading Teacher.

Louise Mount - Warwick Public Schools, Warwick, New York, Remedial Reading Teacher.

Elona Sochor - Washington State College, Pullman, Washington, Asst. Prof. in charge of the Reading Clinic.

Ralph Staiger - Utica School District, Utica, New York, Reading Consultant.

Janice MacDonald - Albany Home for Children, Albany, New York, Reading Teacher.

Ruth Oaks - Alexis I. DuPont School District, Wilmington, Delaware, Elementary Education with Reading.

Barbara Stein - Smith College Day School, Northampton, Mass., Reading in third and fourth grades.

Howard Gershenfeld - West Chester School District, West Chester, Pa., Reading Teacher.

Frieda Dingee - Kingston, New York, Elementary School Principal.

Clara Binnie - Philadelphia, Pa., continuing work on Master's at Temple.

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BASES OF GROUPING IN READING (continued from page 7)

The fourth kind of special class includes reading homerooms and clubs, which may build up an interest in reading, better attitudes, group discussion and evaluation.

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TEMPLE UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES (continued from page 7)

PRACTICES AND MATERIALS. Portions of the program will be devoted to such problems as these: providing for individual differences, maintaining the integration of reading with other language learnings, developing reading vocabulary, developing meaning analysis techniques, and selecting appropriate reading materials.

For further information write:
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Philadelphia 22, Pennsylvania